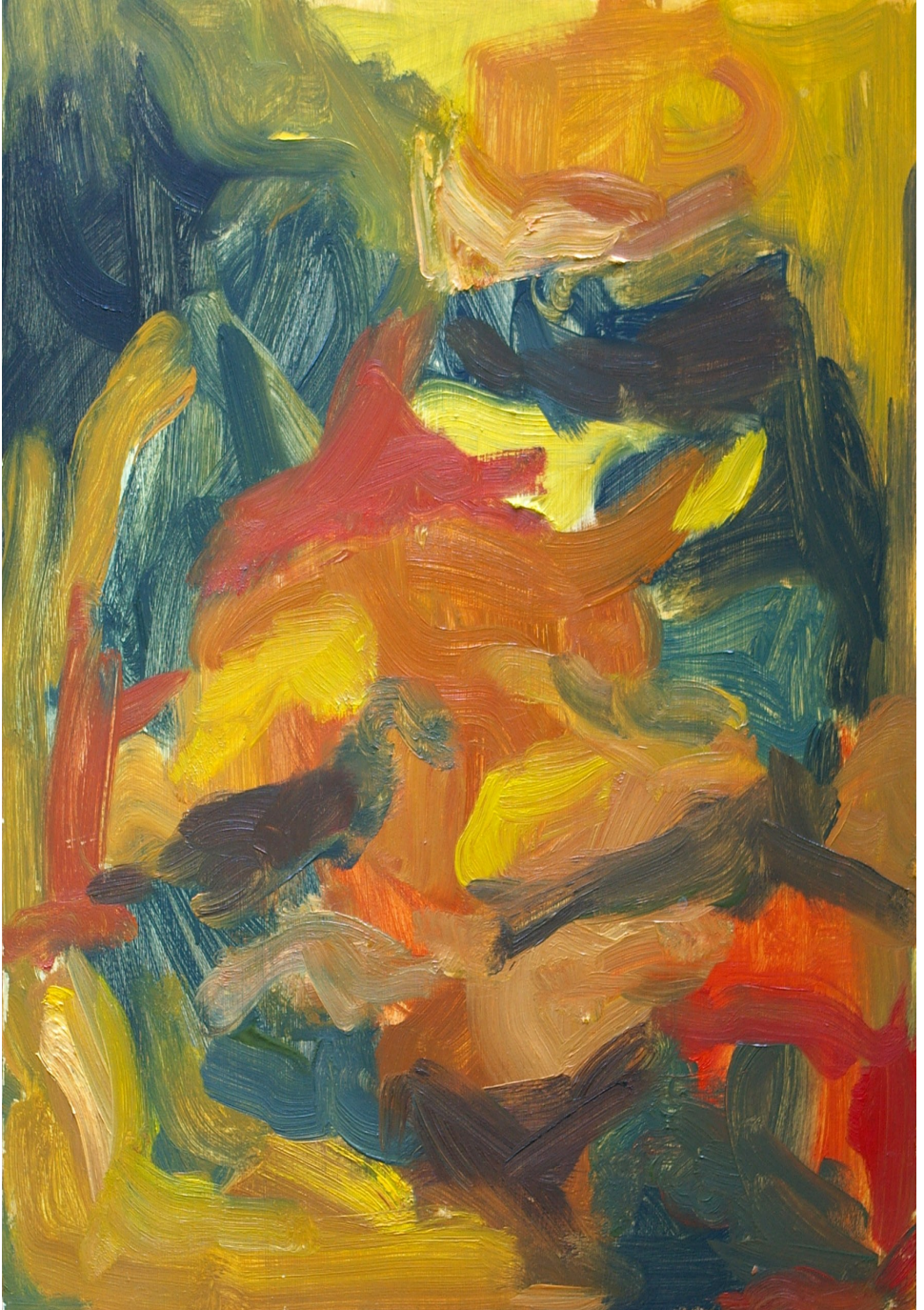


# It Takes All Kinds, Issue 5



Viraya by Jamie Ribisi

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Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of It Takes All Kinds. There isn't too much to say that won't sound cliché, but I still wanted to write something to start off this issue. Firstly, if you came across any mention of a Best of for year 1, it'll be forthcoming at the end of the year when I have 8 issues to choose from. With the crazy schedule I'm keeping these days, I have to admit that it was a stretch to even get this issue done and out. Hell, I'm not even contributing anything this time around. [Well, not entirely true. I had to fill some white space, so I did a couple little bits of digital art.] However, after some discussion with Vanesa of VAS Littlecrow and Rick of Dandelion Studios, I'm seeing this a good thing. ITAK has grown enough that I don't have to come up with any filler content and I can focus on choosing quality submissions and come up with a zine that I can be proud of. This will also give me an opportunity to focus my writing for my one-issue-so-far perzine, "Yeah, but still...", and a few other things in the works, though not necessarily zine-related.

Anyway, I'm really excited about this issue. We have our usual suspects, as it were, with Dangerous Lee, Rick Silva and Gynn Stella, Steve Green, and Vanesa Littlecrow W. We also have a few new faces, including Jamie Ribisi with the gorgeous painting that made the cover, Beth Langford making a second appearance with some art this time, Eric Blair, and Adrian S. Potter (who first appeared in issue 1).

I'm proud to mention that ITAK has its first paid ad from Eidolons.org. Melissa makes beautiful journals and books and her site is worth a look.

Finally, we come to the final installment of The Book of Coffee by Loki W. Kaspari. As a treat, I am reprinting all of the previously printed installments.

On a more business note, the next issue will be out in April. Submission deadline is March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Find more info at the website: [www.bravegirlstudio.net/itak](http://www.bravegirlstudio.net/itak).

Until next issue,

Misty



#### Grocery Shopping by Tim O'Brien

There nothing I hate worse to do that go grocery shopping. It has been weeks since I have gone and there is literally no food left in the house. I am hungry and there is a Cub Foods less than 2 blocks away yet I chose to starve...

...Why is that I wonder???

Well first of all I do not cook. Anyone who knows me well knows Mac & Cheese is to complicated for me to make so it seems somewhat to be a waste of time to go. Why make it when someone else can for you?

Number 2 is kids... I like kids and hope to have them someday but I swear its like an unpublished rule that parents must drug their children with Red Bull and candy before they take them to the Grocery store so they can run wild. Then once the get to the store they set them free to pillage everything they see... Can't this ritual be save for

when you take them to the grandparents?

Number 3 reason is seniors. It seems like when I am either always in there way or they are in mine. If I am in there way it seems that once you get that AARP card you become exempt from ever having to say "excuse my" ever again. Usually they just push or shove or wiggle their way in between you. This is MN after all - please respect the "personal space bubble!". Carts become a weapon if you are in their way too (see #4 for more detail). Now if they are in your way, well then you are basically just screwed. They don't have to be at work at a certain time nor do they have to pick up the kids after school and longer so they have ALL DAY to make sure they are in your way... Never fails too, they will herd up in front of the one item you need to buy. And no matter how many times you say excuse me they just do not move!

Reason 4 is carts. An item designed to assist in the purchase of goods and seems in nature like a good device but it really is the root of evil. Whenever I go grocery shopping, if I need a cart it seems that I always get the cart with the broken wheels. It is almost as if it is reserved and is waiting at the door for me. Once inside the store it becomes a Weapon. I do not know about you, but I personally like my ankles in tact as they are, yet every time I go in there someone has to take their shot at injuring them. I am not trying to be a whiner here but seriously, it HURTS LIKE HELL PEOPLE to get rammed repeatedly in the ankles with a cart!!!!

Number 5 reason is coupons. Its a nice marketing gimmick - convince the consumer that



by giving them a quarter off on their overpriced purchase they are getting a good deal. Why not just give everyone the best price all the time??? And when it comes to checking out the person in front of you in line is always the coupon worshiper and has about 1000 of them in their hands they need frantically sort through while you wait for them to achieve that "big savings".. Meanwhile you have lost 2 hours of your day but in return they were able to save \$2.33 on their total purchase! =)

Number 6 reason (and then I will quit because you probably can sense how I feel by now) it the Dairy manager. This person's job in life is to hate me. I am convinced they sit in the back cooler with a door-cam just waiting and watching for me to enter the store. Once I am enter the store the "sucker" alert goes off and the employees are then deployed to move all the expired dairy products into my easy reach as they know it will be an easy sale. Then there is me just trying get out of the store alive and still somewhat sane I always grab it.... Some people might turn around and "return" the bad milk but the know I will write off the loss of the \$1.69 to avoid going back and it is mission accomplished for them!!!

So I could go on and on for days but the point has been made and in turn I have found yet another way this morning to waste my time and avoid the grocery store. Think I'll stop for something all the way in.

SLACKER



Somewhere in Fargo by Vanesa Littlecrow W and Thien Tran



Inuit 3 by Beth Langford

Playing Scrabble by Laura Cushing

"Would it be nice to time travel?" I asked, pondering the possibilities.

Jules grunted, and reached for the dictionary.

"No really, just think about it. You could affect the entire etymology of any word in that dictionary. You could make any new word exist. Just go back in time, use the word, make sure it gets heard and repeated, maybe published - falls into common usage..." I placed my letter tiles carefully.

Jules shook his head, and set the dictionary down, eying what I'd just written.. "A word like, say... Sngfth?"

I nodded.

"You're out of vowels, huh?"

"How'd you guess?"

## **Over It** by Katrina Joyner

You detest bridges. One the way home from school at night, you try to avoid them but there are only three roads you know. They each have bridges with metal grating and a daunting gap to the water below. So you drive over them as carefully (or quickly) as you can. Behind you, other cars practically ride on your bumper. You think maybe they hate bridges, too.

The worst is when traffic backs up, and you have to creep over that bridge. You have no car radio. At least the air conditioner works, except the heater is broken. Winter will be coming soon, and jackets are uncomfortable. You glance often at the useless heater lever, wondering what it takes to fix it.

Around you, buildings twinkle like some fairy tale city. There are flashing lights and a siren coming up the bridge behind you. The other cars are already edging aside. Cursing, you veer the steering wheel to the left. Closer to the edge, you eye your rear view mirror to watch the ambulance move past. It finally does, but only after the car in front of you moves up an inch.

Sometimes when driving alone, you fantasize turning your car sharply to the side. You picture the lurch as momentum pushes your vehicle into the clear air. The water would hit with severe brutality, but the car would save you from instant death. Then you would sit, trapped, as water rushes in. Your last moments would be spent gasping with your nose at the roof.

You hate bridges, but you are strangely fond of breathing so you don't take the invisible side road. The traffic finally begins to edge forward until you slide down the other side. Ambulances and police cars are parked at the bottom and up the highway a little ways. There is an accordion which used to be a black truck pulled onto the grass. Several paramedics are clustered around a pale lump of flesh, which does not move.

Trying not to stare, you wonder if it might be someone you know. Speculation takes grip in your mind. What if it's your landlord's bookkeeper? Wouldn't that be nice? You would love to see that bitch prostrate on the side of the road with paramedics futilely trying to keep her alive. Then you wouldn't have to worry about her coming into the house while you're gone. Your belongings would stay put, and she would never again say, "The house is a mess!" because you left a textbook on the table.

Then, if you had something to say to the landlord, you could email him and say it yourself. It would be okay if you occasionally came home too tired to straighten the couch cushions. You grind your teeth as you think about that; how the woman just walks into the house and accuses you constantly of never getting any housework done, even when the only mess is a dirty glass in the kitchen. You hate her for being your landlord's friend, as well as his bookkeeper, and a meddling asshole.

You wonder what it would take to just shove her off of the bridge and be done with.

The flow of traffic speeds up, and your exit ramp comes into view. You take it, going ten miles faster than you should, and glide onto an empty highway. You are eager to get home because your underwear is riding your crotch. Your toes are twisted in a

cotton wrinkle of discomfort because your socks are drooping around your ankles. Behind you, the bridge looms forgotten in the night sky.

The next morning, you hit the snooze button as many times as you can. Finally, you throw a pillow at the alarm clock. The clock smashes to the floor, cracking the faceplate and making a continuous, sick sound. If you had super powers, you would throw a fireball at the bloody thing. It would not be a big fireball, of course, because that would burn the house down.

What the hell. You live in Springfield, which burned to the ground at the turn of the 19th century. Your creaky house was built in 1913, after that famous fire. What harm is a little fire going to do, anyway? Maybe Springfield would burn down twice, taking your job and your landlord's bookkeeper with it.

In the mad rush to get away, you are caught in the scramble of panicked citizens as you flee towards the water. Flames are hot on your back while women scream. Idiots jump into the river, which sweeps them away in a swirling current. The bridge is so overloaded with fleeing people, it succumbs and crumbles. Falling bodies tumble downward, pushing each other deep under the water with fatal splashes.

Just as you feel yourself slip downward, you open your eyes and stare at the ceiling. The alarm clock is still screaming, even though you have overslept by two hours. This is the fifth time you have missed work, so you don't even bother to call.

After crushing the alarm clock with your dictionary, the one that was a gift from your ex, you sweep up the pieces to put in the trash. They never make it there, because on the way into the kitchen you notice your homework on the floor. Without a job, you will finally have time to get things done on time.

Ignoring your homework and the clock pieces now set by the wall, you go back upstairs. You throw away the worn out socks, put on some sandals, and brush your hair. The doorbell rings, but you don't answer the door. The bookkeeper lets herself in, earrings jingling and fingers winking from ridiculous amounts of gold. "Hello?" she carols into the empty front room.

The door shuts; the bitch is inside now, looking at the broken clock pieces and neglected homework. She has a fist on each hip, and her bushy eyebrows are lowered into a straight line. You just know it. She is thinking about calling your landlord to complain. Maybe she will take a picture of the clutter and insist that she can find someone else to house sit while he's on vacation. You want to stomp on the floor hard enough to make the chandelier fall on her head.

She goes into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. Taking this marvelous opportunity, you sneak out the back door and nearly run to your car. Another car almost hits you as you pull out. "Asshole!" you scream, but with the windows up so no one can hear.

There is not much traffic going over the bridge today, so you take it at your own speed. Blue skies span around you, and sunlight glitters on the water like a thousand drowning, burning men. Once you reach the other side, you park your car along the side of the road. That is where you sit for an hour, watching the water. Police cars drive by on the highway, but no one disturbs you.

You wonder what it's like to dance on the water with the sunlight. The bridge, looming, has no answers for your philosophical query. After a while, you get out of your car and begin to walk. Your feet pass each other, and you are filled with anticipation. Deliberately, you mount the bridge. Your heart begins to pound and you want to turn back, but you keep going.

After a while, your legs tire. The water grows ever more distant, and although you are terrified you continue to walk. Cars sweep by, shaking your foothold. A scream homesteads in your throat, but you don't make a sound. When you finally reach the top, you look down at the water, the dancing lights, and gauge the distance.

If you had three wishes, you would fly. You would turn the bridge into chocolate, or create a working car radio out of thin air. You take a deep breath, leaning over the railing.

"YOU FUCKING BITCH, I HATE YOU!" you shout. Around you, the echo dances with the lights. You stare at the buildings where you stand, defying gravity. The city stands with you, without pushing back. This is where you stay while the sun moves slowly across the sky.

Finally, you start your descent back to the silent cab of your car. A truck pulls up, and the passenger side window rolls down. Inside, an old woman blinks with bovine eyes. "Are you alright?" she asks. "Did you break down?"

"Nah," you say with a mouth full of teeth. "I just felt like taking a walk."

"Are you sure?"

"Yep," you say while your feet keep moving. The truck crawls alongside of you. "Thanks for your concern, though."

The woman nods after a moment, rolls up the window, and the truck moves away. If you were magic, you would give her a golden goose. Maybe she has a gruff old man at home. Maybe he makes her bring him beer while he farts and burps in front of the television.

When you finally reach your car, you slip inside and lean back in the seat. There is nothing else you want to do today, but you crank the engine and get back on the highway. The bookkeeper is still at the house when you get home. "Hello!" she says with a smile on her face, thinking about the clock pieces and the homework. Your textbooks and folders are now stacked neatly in a corner, and the pieces are gone. You would have liked to keep those pieces, you decide. "I was just leaving. It looks like the bathroom is finished."

"Awesome," you say, returning her smile with the enthusiasm of an aardvark. "I have to get going to work, or I'd stay to chat. Sorry."

She doesn't mind, in fact she seems relieved. You change clothes in your bedroom, being careful to fold your dirty underwear into a neat triangle and lay it on the pillow of your bed. You hear the door slam, and the house settles back into isolated feeling of emptiness.

For a while, you stand at the window and watch the neighborhood. A dark man pushes a shopping cart down the road. His clothes are murky with filth, and he keeps his eyes to the ground as he walks. You recognize him; he begs for money outside of the emergency room at the local hospital. His cart is empty, but his hands are gripped tightly on the handle as he travels out of your line of sight.

The mattress gives just a little when you sit on your bed. The blankets are rumpled in mountainous heaps, and the pillows need fluffing. You curl between the valleys, your hair becoming a sliken river. The phone rings, and you think about your ex. You remember those bottomless brown eyes, dancing as you finished your beer to say, "Lay me another."

You can't remember if you two had sex that night.

The phone stops ringing just before you get up to tear it out of the wall. Once again, things in the house stand still. Outside, someone blows their car horn. The sound manages to get past the window pane, but it's faint when it reaches your ears.

You close your eyes.

The View from the Bridge by Steve Green

*Wisdom Blank  
by John O'Brien*

Life's a bridge,  
spanning the gulf  
between the moment of our birth  
and the instant of our death

*A taste for questions  
An eye for answers  
A stomach that couldn't  
handle either.*

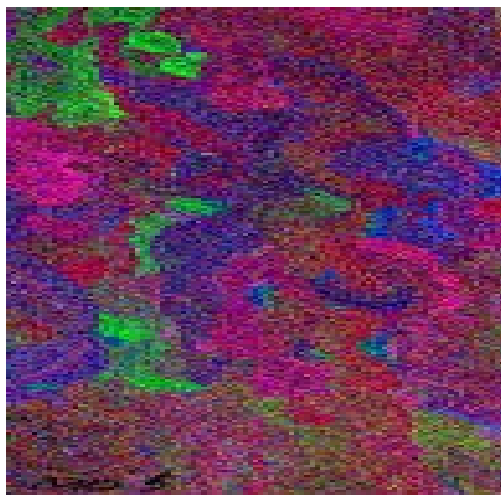
Some choose the duration of their journey;  
others barely step on at one side  
before reaching the other

Do we have further bridges to cross?  
and should we decide instead  
to leap over the barrier's edge,  
what awaits us in the darkness below?



Beth Langford





Babylon by Lauren Kenney

Did you count yourself lucky when you saw you'd survive?

Glad to know you'd forget the strontium in her eyes.

Well the verdict's in, doctor, and you've met your demise

The prognosis is death in a martyr's disguise.

And you laid the bricks of Babel with your blood and your sweat.

Determined to claw out of your strontium net.

Well the verdict's in, doctor, and I think you'll regret

For had you built her with bone, she wouldn't have fallen down yet.

And you'll stand at the window with the dogs down below

Convicted of crimes that you feel, but don't know.

Well the verdict's in, doctor, and the evidence shows

That despite best intentions, we reap what we sow.

And you laid the bricks of Babel with your blood and your sweat.

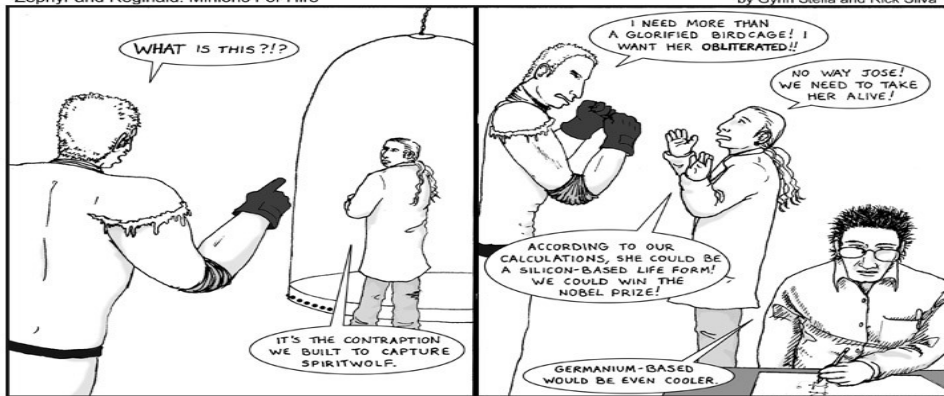
Watch the dogs salivate as you pay off your debt.

Well the verdict's in, doctor, and please don't forget

Expunging your actions won't erase your intent.

Zephyr and Reginald: Minions For Hire

by Gynn Stella and Rick Silva



Defining Love by Jeremy Gibson

Love, is the ultimate salvation.

Complicated yet beautifully forsaken.

Love, is the defining of your patience.

Heart and soul, a heavenly combination.

Dreaming on a cloud

Flying.

Love, is the spiritual connection.

Intimately defying the rules of gravity.

Love, is the heart's natural protection.

Love, is the purest addiction.

Something like a miracle within.

Love, is the realest account of fiction.

A portrait of commitment; easily written.

Love, is the balance of your imperfections.

Your confidential secrets revealed.

Love, is the feeling of consciousness gratitude.

Bond by love, indulged in the arms of your soul mate.





## Harvest Walk by Rick Silva

The dried leaf crackle echoes each footfall  
while wind sweeps precious warmth from flesh  
and the ghost of every breath lingers a moment,  
taunting, circling, leering,  
disappearing, one more mortal reminder  
that the veil thins to parchment skin  
while shadows wing their way  
to play or prey on these most fragile hours.

We bring candlefire, sheltered  
fixed by melting wax within  
squash or gourd or pumpkin shell  
carved in face of fright, a lure:

"Take this soul, not mine this night  
Taste this fear, this inner light  
Snuff out this flame, your hunger sate."

A mask, a hood, a stout wool cloak,  
a mile to town, by the wagon road,  
air scented sweet from haybale,  
cider press, and woodstove fire.

We gather tonight to tell the Old Stories,  
to sing harvest plenty promise  
of hope to see the next planting,  
to dance masked, our numbers uncounted,  
hall doors open to the night cold,  
offering sharing to whoever...  
whatever seeks our warm mortal cheer  
this cold thin night

December, when we near starved to death, 'cause the band wasn't so good. No one wants to swing and jive to a band ain't got no good horn player. That's just how it is. Daddy wanted his band to get a gig so bad, he'd given a piece of his soul as the bargain.

Wouldn't have done no good to tell him, 'cause then I'd have to explain that I'd gotten my gypsy momma's gift. That would have just added to his burdens.

So after Daddy'd packed Matty's shiny trumpet away with the other instruments, locked it up tight as a drum, I marched straight on down to the gin joint my Daddy couldn't keep Matty outta. Matty was still there, slobberin and crying like a kicked dog. Fell right offa his chair when he seen me, and I picked him right up again (I'd inherited more than momma's sight, I'd also taken after her curse. Another thing that Daddy didn't need to know).

Anyhow, I looked him straight in the bleary eyes and I said "Matty Parker, you get yourself outta this joint and clean yourself up, right now!"

"Lemme be, Amy," he muttered. "I ain't no good."

Hearing him talk like that hurt worse than anything. My father's words had bit right through Matty, and he was believing them at heart.

"Ain't none of us no good, Matty Parker. Ain't none of us no bad, either. We only is what we are. And right now, you is more'n a little drunk - and you smell kinda bad, too."

"Miss Amy, I love you," he sobbed into my shoulder as I drug him toward the door.

"I know Matty, I know." I didn't tell him just then that the feeling was mutual like. "Ain't your fault you got a demon soul."

"I know, I know," he echoed back at me as we staggered out the door and into the sun.

"That just means you gotta be like me. You can do what's right, Matty. You just gotta work a little harder to figure out what that right thing is." Was a disability,

## Matty Be Good by Laura Cushing

I didn't argue none when daddy told me  
Matty weren't no good.

Wouldn't have helped-- he wouldn't have  
believed me none.

"Demons got hold of that boy," Daddy  
said, and swore a lot while putting the  
instruments away. Daddy's band was  
playing down at the Divine, and Matty'd  
'bout ruined the show.

I didn't add that the demons possessing  
him were kind of literal like, neither.

"I took his trumpet as payment," said  
Daddy, "'cause it was what'd hurt him the  
most. Trumpet's about the only thing that  
matters to that boy more than the  
drinking."

Daddy was wrong there, too - 'bout the  
trumpet being the only thing. But there  
was truth in taking it hurting Matty- that  
boy loved to play. Lived to pay. He played  
like no creature born of this world could  
ever. That's 'cause he wasn't. Not born of  
a momma and a daddy like the rest of  
us, not come up out of no womb.

I didn't tell Daddy how he himself had  
wished Matty into being that stormy

that's all. Like how in school where sometimes I wouldn't pick up on things as quick as the other kids. I just kept right on trying 'till I caught on.

"My head hurts powerful bad, miss Amy," Matty complained, squinting hard against the sun. "And your father fired me from the band. What'm I gonna do?"

The answer was clear as churchbells. "You're gonna run away with me, Matty Parker."

"But Miss Amy!" he protested, holding his head from the effort, "Your father's been kind to me. Kinder than I ever deserved."

"You ain't got no idea what you deserve, or what Daddy's got commin', neither," I said. However unintentioned, Daddy'd called a demon into being and he was getting the threefold payback it cost. Weren't no evil in the intent, or the purchase - but that didn't matter any more than the use for an omelette or an eggging mattered when you bought eggs from the grocery store.

"But what'll we do?" he whined, still drunk enough to be shrill.

"First we're gonna get your trumpet back," I said, " and we're gonna get away from this town. And then, Matty Parker, then you're gonna learn to be good 'cause I won't have my husband any other way."

His eyes got real wide like. "Husband? Amy, I can't. I mean, how are we gonna... you love me, huh? You love me, don'tcha?"

I turned away and that was all the answer he needed. He slipped his pale hand, smooth as a baby's ', into mind. One of the peculiars about Matty, having never been born, was that his hands was real soft and white, and didn't have no swirls and whirls like most fingers have neither.

"You'll see, Amy," he said, sobering up from the serious talking. "I'm gonna learn. I'll show your Daddy, I'll show all of 'em. I'll learn to be good."

"Ain't a matter of being good, Matty Parker. It's just what's right." I was gonna have to keep saying that until he understood. He had no idea of the journey he'd just begun with that one step, the one we were gonna take together - but I knew. I knew the road ahead of us was unpaved and long, that we weren't gonna get where we were goin easy.

"Amy," he said, his face paler than his hands, "What about my trumpet?"

"What 'bout it?" I asked.

"Your father took it," he said. "Said I owed him that much, on account of he'd lost money on me..."

"We'll get it back," I said, squeezing his hand.

"How? He won't give it up. We'd like to have to kill your daddy before he goes back on his word..."

"I know," I said, without regret. I saw my daddy's eyes, already cold with the grave. Weren't no evil in it, just the repayment. Just what he deserved.

"Amy! I don't wanna kill your daddy..."

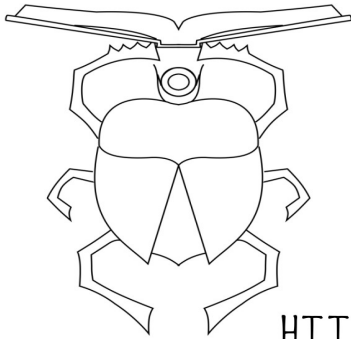
"Hush up, Matty. " There were people walking down the street who wouldn't understand. Same kinda people who had shunned mamma every time the curse came on her, every time she did what she hadda do. They'd do the same to Matty and me, or maybe worse.

"Amy, Amy please..." I saw in his eyes that he feared for the little piece'o soul, dark that it was, that he had.

"Ain't no thing. Just what we gotta do. You want your trumpet?"

"More than anything," he admitted. "Well, anything, 'cept you..."

"Then be good, Matty Parker. Matty, be good..."



# EIDOLONS

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## Vindication!

Note: Author name and company have been withheld at author's request.

I bought a pre-inked stamp from K-Mart in March of 1996. It was not a big purchase – \$7.43 with tax. It was just a simple little stamp that said PAID which I've used for the past nine years to mark my bills once I've sent payment off. No big deal, right?

Well, when I bought it something about the packaging really disturbed me. To this day I'm not sure why, but it really stuck with me. The box claimed that the stamp had a "lifetime warranty" – that I would "never have to worry about running out of ink" or the company would replace it for free. I remember looking at this cheap plastic pre-inked stamp and thinking that there was no fucking way this stamp was going to last a lifetime. I knew the company just put that on the package as a sales tool, counting on the fact that when the stamp did run out of ink; no one would actually take the time to send it in for a replacement. It was on that day, nearly nine years ago, that I vowed to get my stamp replaced for free when it ran out of ink.

You know what's coming, right? Yep. My stamp ran out of ink last night. Here I was all ready to mark my telephone bill as "paid" and my "lifetime warrantied" stamp would not make a mark. Fuck that shit. Sure, it'd be easy to run out to the store and spend another \$8 on a new stamp (after all, \$8 every nine years isn't so bad) but it's the principle of the situation. Sure, they're willing to make all sorts of promises about their product when they're trying to sell it to you, but would they stand by their product when they needed to replace it?

I'd saved the original packaging and receipt for just this very occasion. The warranty section of the box referred me to a customer service number for any stamp-related issues. I called them earlier today:

CUSTOMER SERVICE: "Hello, customer service, how may I help you?"

ME: "Hi there. I have a stamp that ran out of ink."

CS: "How long have you had the stamp sir?"

ME: "About nine years."

CS: "Wow! What can I help you with today?"

ME: "It says on the back of the box that I never have to worry about running out of ink, and that if I ever did, I could send the stamp in for a free replacement."

CS: "I'm not sure if we're still running that promotion..."

ME: "It wasn't a promotion – it is a Warranty."

CS: "Please hold for a few moments while I find out what our policy is..."

[90 Second Pause]

CS: "OK, we can replace your stamp if you have the original packaging and store receipt."

ME: "I have both of those."

CS: "You do? Really?"

ME: "Yes ma'am I do."

CS: "I don't think we've ever had someone keep their receipt and packaging."

ME: "I've been waiting for this day for nine years."

CS: "Uh. Hmmm. Well, we'll need you to send the stamp back along with a check for \$5.99 to cover postage for your new stamp."

ME: "Is that what you consider free replacement? Because it kind of sounds like you're charging me \$5.99 for a stamp that you claim will never run out of ink."

CS: "Well, ummm, I guess I see your point, but that's what I was told."

ME: "Let me speak with your supervisor."

CS: "Ok, hold on. Let me see if I can work this out before you talk to my supervisor."

[Two Minute Pause]

CS: "Ok, I've spoken with my supervisor and he's agreed to let me send out a new stamp to you free of charge."

ME: "That's great. Where I can send my old stamp?"

CS: "Oh, there's no need to send the old one in. We believe you. Let me just get your address, and we'll send you a new one."

ME: "That's very generous of you."

CS: "To be perfectly honest, my supervisor told me that this is the only request he's ever gotten to replace a stamp where the person actually kept their receipt and packaging. Most people just go out and buy a new stamp."

ME: "I'm not most people."

CS: "I guess not. You should receive your new stamp in one to two weeks. Thank you."

ME: "Thank you."

It's the small victories that make life so sweet.



## Feliz Cumpleanos By Laura Cushing

In retrospect, punching my hand through the plate glass of the living room window hadn't been the brightest idea. Now I was sitting on the porch, the rain stinging my eyes and the wounds as I waited for Mac to arrive and rescue me from the situation I'd gotten myself into. Really, I had no one to blame for this but myself... well, and maybe Sofie, just a little. She'd thrown me this party for my 24th birthday, even though we'd only been going out for a couple of months. Apparently, a couple of months was enough that she'd decided who got invited... which meant all 'our friends' (meaning her friends), and not Jules and Mac. To her, my bandmates were the ultimate in forbidden - they had no manners, they didn't 'respect the earth', and didn't fit in with the trendy new-age vibe that she was going for.

I hated everything about my birthday party - from the fact that she'd insisted we have it at my place, to the biodegradable streamers and recycled paper plates that were decorating the table. Most of all, I hated her friends, mulling around and wishing 'Sophie's boyfriend' a 'happy one', like they couldn't even remember my name or the occasion. And then, she'd gone and done it...

"Play something, Michael," she'd said. Not a request, a command performance. All her friends looked up expectantly, having heard, of course that 'Sophie's boyfriend' was 'some kind of music major'.

Embarrassed, and more than a little annoyed by the request, I'd refused. "No one wants to hear me play," I muttered to her, shaking my head. The stereo was already on, playing one of her transcendentalist cds, and I wasn't about to repeat that kind of sound. My music was vulgar and raw, like the bandmates that weren't welcome at the party. It didn't belong here. Today, I felt like I didn't much belong here either, and this would just make it worst.

But she persisted... and persisted... until finally, I was shouting. "NO! I don't want to play, and I'm not going to play, so drop it!"

I don't shout often, and her friends are apparently as unused to the sound of a raised voice as she was. They looked down their well-formed noses at me, and started gathering their things to leave. Sophie was crying, telling me how I ruin everything because I can't be appropriate. It's the same speech she gives me, only in reverse, when I won't 'fuck her' because I prefer to delude myself into thinking we're making love.

As she was leaving, suddenly I'm feeling abandoned like she's taking everything - like she's my mother, walking out when I was 14. My mother, who sent me a postcard from Mexico on my 17th birthday with some shitty sombrero wearing dog on the front wishing me happy birthday in Spanish.

"Feliz Cumpleanos," I'd shouted (again) and punched my hand through the glass as she hurried off the porch and out into the rain. She didn't turn around, not even for the sound of shattering glass.

Fortunately I had my cell in my pocket, so I didn't have to go back inside and track blood all over the carpet in addition to the glass and the rain. I called Mac because nothing surprises him - he's the calmest person I know, in any situation. Jules would have been freaking out the whole way here, and not to mention when he got here, wouldn't have had much of a clue what to do. Mac being older and wiser than both Jules and myself, he was the one to call.

I'm sure he got there in a timely fashion, but it seemed like I sat for hours soaking in the bone and staring at my arm wondering if I could pick the glass out myself with my off hand. Wondering about stupid things, like if I'd ever get another girlfriend, and why blood plus rain equaled pink, and why I didn't feel much at all other than numb. I hadn't explained much of what happened over the phone, but when he got out of the car, Mac was carrying a towel. He carefully put it around my arm, warning me not to press down because of the glass in my skin and started guiding me towards

the truck.

"I think the emergency room needs to handle this," Mac said, then opened the passenger side door for me.

"I'm sorry." I stared down at the blood already seeping through the towel. "I fucked myself up good."

It was my right hand, too. My good hand - and I needed my hands to play my guitar, besides. What if I had managed to damage myself beyond repair?

Mac got in the other side, started driving towards Perinthus General. "Everyone fucks up. It's going to be okay."

The conviction in his voice was solid enough to make me believe. And I still have scars on my hand, wrist, and arm from that night - but I recovered, I can still play. I see Sofie sometimes, around town. I wonder if I had done what she wanted me to, would we still be together? I doubt it. She always looks the other way when I pass, and I've never had the nerve to speak to her about what happened that night. I really don't know if I'd apologize, or just say that I hope she found someone to fuck her like she wanted, but who was still tame enough to perform for parties.

Maybe it's best that we don't speak. And if it had all gone the way she wanted it to, I don't think I would have liked the person I'd become.

Dear Martin by Don Savant

dear martin  
i too  
have a dream

i  
have a dream that  
stretches from  
the lowest point in the valley  
to the  
tip of  
the highest mountain top  
it  
stretches from  
the left coast  
to  
the right coast and  
from the bottom of my feet  
to the crown on my head

you see  
i too  
am a king  
not by name  
not by status  
but by culture  
and in this life  
i will accept nothing less  
than the spoils that my kingdom brings forth

through my  
hard work  
my dedication  
and my faith in God  
i will  
surpass those who  
attempt to shackle me  
i will  
progress  
further than

this society  
would like me to and  
it's because of you  
that i have the will to do so

because of you  
my dream  
will be fulfilled  
and with that accomplishment  
i will try my best  
to hold hands with  
and uplift  
those around me  
whether i know them or not  
and help them to  
also reach their planned destinations

as one  
i am merely a man  
but with people  
who share my dream  
with knowledge  
with love and support  
i am a man on a mission  
with a team who will push me  
until we all have made our way

determination is in my soul  
it runs  
through my blood stream and  
keeps my heart moving  
while  
my focus remains in tact  
and while  
i continue  
to move forward  
and ultimately make both yours  
and my dream come to pass



Path by Jamie Ribisi

#### WHY JOOJET BECAME A BASS PLAYER



## Emotional Purgatory

by Don Savant

it's that

feeling again

that

i can't

breathe

that

smile that won't stop spreading across

my face

that

nothing or no one else matters but her

... mentality

that i've experienced so many times

before

i ask

each time

is this

the time

is this

my time

to live in

our time

or

do i

still need

more time

to grow through one more heartache

love is

bittersweet

like

salted chocolate

and though i

wouldn't take anything for it

i also

wouldn't encourage

anyone to seek it out

yet i

wouldn't advise anyone to miss out

because

it's definitely something to

speak about

whether it's filled with

the truth

or a line of lies

love is

the only emotion that

can capture

and bring forth all others

from within your soul and

it can be

the greatest feeling

or it

can be the worst experience of your

life

therefore i

approach you

with caution

this time around because

i'm not yet sure

if this time

is the arrival of a brand new love or

the beginning of a brand new pain



**Queen** by Cecil L. Donaby Jr.

Behind every strong man  
Is a stronger woman  
Reflecting the light of the Sun  
In the absence of ONE  
The mother of civilization  
She raises a nation  
At times mistreated and abused  
She takes on the responsibility of two  
We must start protecting our EARTH  
She's the origin of our birth  
In her fullest equality  
She completes me  
Together hand in hand  
We unite  
And bring forth the Sun of Man  
She shines bright  
Even in her own light  
And deserves recognition  
Acknowledge her position  
And call her by her proper name  
Do not bring her shame  
She is royalty  
To be treated with dignity  
So take a knee  
And bow to her Majesty.

**Beautiful Black Queen** by Cecil L. Donaby Jr.

My Beautiful Black Queen  
I acknowledged you in a dream  
Like a prophecy  
You were sent to me  
The vision of what a true woman should be  
Smooth chocolate complexion  
A perfect creation  
Thick lips  
Full hips  
A fine physique  
Full of mystique  
But for years mistreated and abused  
By those who said they loved you  
Unaware of your royal robes  
You accepted their hoochie clothes  
Degrading you in music videos  
Calling you names like \*bitches\* and ho  
So I come to you Queen  
To return you to your throne  
To your eminence  
Revealing to you your forgotten radiance  
Whether Cocoa Deluxe or Butter Pecan  
My beautiful black Queen it is you we long  
Let me wrap you in your robes of fine linen  
Transcend you to who you were in the beginning  
My Beautiful Black Queen

**Nubian: Beautiful Black Queen 2**

Cecil L. Donaby Jr.

NUBIAN is a hue ensconced in  
Your delicate skin  
An elegant blend  
Of Taffy, Tapioca & Mocha.  
The desire to gaze on,

For a romantic or platonist  
Liaison is a  
A nuanced response to  
Your clay onyx.  
Men want to play on it, lay on it  
Mold its soul, drape its shape.  
But our image tends to limit, diminish;  
Our thoughts result  
In corruption of the substance.  
So we cannot be visionary,  
Only divisionary.  
A soothing jaunt into

**Your NUBIANCE**

Your Beauty in the true sense of consciousness  
Has ancient roots  
Beneath the sanctioned roof  
Of the authentic 1st World  
---Africa---  
Thru forensics, its birth pearl  
Has been shown to have grown  
Alone on its own  
Under a strong Black sun, that spawned  
Moral beings  
Long before the crack of one flat dawn  
For Europeans  
Who only later  
Searched, learned & found  
That the earth turned round.  
And You  
My Queen  
Were Discovered.

**Windswept** by Rick Silva

Cranberries wash against the edges of the bog-  
canals  
Remnants of the late summer harvest now  
decaying sweet  
With the awakening warmth of the springtime  
sun  
  
Ground grows muddy and at noontime under  
open blue  
While the wind off the Atlantic rushes in salty and  
sure  
Picking up the fruity fermenting scent that calls  
to the birds  
  
It's too cold yet for the beaches or the mini-golf  
courses  
Only one of the fried clam shacks has opened out  
on Route 28  
Christmas Tree Shops still has displays of snow  
shovels and de-icer

Father puts on his jacket, opens the back door  
and smells the air  
Opens front and back barn doors, lets the wind  
clear out the cobwebs  
It's time to think about getting the boat back in  
the water

## HOT STUFF



Center of the Universe by Eric Blair

Somewhere in Fargo by Vas Littlecrow and Thien Tran

"It's the 10th of November 2003 and I just checked my e-mail. And yes this is me living in the past. Not being able to move on. The past is all in your head. Everything was as dramatic. As edge-of-the-seat. As life or death. As beautifully tragic as you want it to be. Don't worry, nobody else who was ever there will ever call you on how much you are blowing everything out of proportions. How much you're exaggerating. How much it's all a lie. Your past. Your beautiful tragedy to sulk in for the rest of your life. Your life, the lie. Nobody cares though. Everybody else is just as busy constructing their past out of the worst memories. Events. Deaths. Relationships. Funny how you only remember the negative shit isn't it? I guess it is much more interesting. Who really likes happy endings anyways? I wasn't expecting to hear from Suzy again. Suzy with her three moods, "bloodthirsty, lusty and suicidal." Suzy with her nicely packaged explanations for why nothing ever works out. Suzy with her drug problem. Suzy who's so incredibly sorry for everything. In the e-mail Suzy says I should "grow up." Suzy says I'm not the center of the fucking universe. Suzy says I should stop trying to be so tragic and sad all the time. Suzy says if I did I might stop being so unhappy and sad. Suzy thinks the fucking sarcasm and bitterness is getting old.

Some days are so good there's nowhere to go but down. Some days your life feels like a 24 hour Kodak picture spot. All smiling. All singing. All dancing. Some days you just can't relate to the rest of mankind. Humanity. The world. Because you just can't understand their attitude. Their pessimistic approach to this beautiful life. Some days you could die happy. And looking back, it's too bad you didn't. It's too bad I didn't. The setting is Atlanta, Georgia. To be more specific, "Little Five Points." Lighting, sound, and direction is by Everything Fucking Perfect Productions. And this is the plot. This is the pitch. This is me on vacation. This is me knowing exactly what I'm going to do. This is me realizing that perfect moments are made not given. This is me sitting outside a gas station with Suzy smoking cigarettes and drinking iced tea. She goes in to buy drinks and I stay outside smoking. I stay outside inscribing a book I just bought for her. This is me keeping it simple. I write her name. I write "Suzy." I write "I love you." And I sign my name. I give it to her when she returns and this is just the best day ever. I talk some bullshit about how I'm putting

her in charge of my happiness. This is me finally doing something. Walking back to her truck I consider every passing wall, storefront, and alleyway. This is something happening. I grab her in front of a theater and push her up against the building. This is me taking action. This is me holding Suzy up against the wall with a crazed smile on my face. This is another in a series of mistakes I build my life around. I ask Suzy if she wants to get married and she smiles. She smiles and I just start kissing her. Up against the building she doesn't have to worry about how to respond with my tongue in her mouth. We kiss for awhile and then we resume walking back to her truck. I think she's a little shocked. Me, I'm walking on air. I did it. I actually asked. And for the second time with a big smile on her face. Looking flushed. Looking happy. She says, "You're fucking crazy."

"Fucking crazy," that's what she called me when I asked. She didn't answer right away. The speed freak. The meth addict. Suzy didn't answer right away. Didn't answer right away when I kissed her up against a brick wall. Didn't answer right away as to whether or not she'd marry me. I know what you're thinking it was a stupid idea, but like any stupid idea it made sense at the time. She said yes the following night and my future started to come together in my head. This was all while I spent a week with her in Georgia. While I thought I had everything figured out. While everything was perfect. It was a bad idea from the beginning. It was all a bad-fucking-idea from the beginning. Every fucking moment was a mistake. Working together. Staying in touch. The park bench. The kissing. The hand in her pants. The concert. The motel room. The speed. The kissing. The making out. The everything but fucking. Breaking up with Libby. Going out with Suzy. Going to Georgia. The whole week of fucking bliss. That other concert. Getting lost in Atlanta. Finding ourselves in her bedroom. The constant fucking. The drinking. The smoking. Little five points. The brick wall. The proposal. The kissing. The thinking that everything was going to work out. Possibly feeling like the person I dumped Libby for had to be more than an affair. Possibly being two people who didn't believe in happiness. Wanting to believe in something. Anything. Each other. All the pictures. The airports. The bedrooms. The families. The bedrooms. The sex. The constant e-mails. The phone-calls. The phone sex. The postcards. The letters. The rings. Our trip to Savannah. Our trip to the ocean. Our trip together. Losing my glasses out the passenger side window. Vomiting all over her car and myself. We listen to Richard Hell on repeat and she asks me if I'm ok. Covered in vomit I tell her that I'm having the best day of my life. And I love her. And she loves me. And it was all a fucking mistake.

Have you been paying attention? Are you finding a lot that interests you? That you can relate to. Do you see a lot of yourself in me? Or were you sleeping this whole time while life was happening?. While my life was passing you by. Were you going to work while all the interesting

events occurred? Going to school. Watching television. Going to movies. Is this not interesting enough for you? This won't make you rich. This won't improve your social standing. How god views you when he's not too busy watching BYU football. Just give me one more chance. A couple of days. A few weeks. A year or two. Give me some time to become interesting enough for you. I'm trying really hard. Just don't complain that this isn't going anywhere. That it doesn't make any sense. That it offers nothing, but asks for so much. You really should have grown accustomed to that far before came here. This overly dramatized portrayal. This never ending illogical bullshit. This me. Me on the phone. The beginning of something else ending. It's late and Suzy missed her plane. And we are talking on the phone. And then I'm walking up to meet her. It's a little awkward. It's a lot of talking. No worrying. It's so fucking cute. She seems happy. I seem completely out of sorts. I hang out at her old house for awhile. Where she was living I met her. This is much later. We still don't know each other, but of course we're in love. The world can go to hell. An easy attitude to have, but try telling that to the world. You know what it will say? No difference. Same thing. The next day I'm still acting weird, almost as if my life is falling apart around me. And we both go up there to hang out with Suzy. Keep her company. Just a little friendly conversation. Libby and I go up there and I hit the bottle. I talk in code. I act "fucking crazy." And with Libby only one wall away I kiss Suzy goodbye. On the flight home she writes, "I needed to get him alone for just one second...He leaned over and kissed me....I looked at him...stunned ..." "You are fucking crazy"" On her flight home I'm still in reality. Things fall apart. We begin talking on the phone all the time. E-mailing all the time. We love talking to each other. Our voices are so comforting. When we are feeling down we are always around. This is the beginning of phase 3 of my life having anything at all to do with Suzy. Phase 1 was meeting her. Initiation. Seeds planted. Phase 2 was putting my hand down her pants in her rented car. Kissing a girl I really shouldn't be kissing. Seeds beginning to sprout. And here's phase 3. Love long distance style. This is after the meth induced attempt at sex. This is after the "I love you"s are exchanged. This is the seed growing into a beautiful plant. In phase 5 it will be revealed that this beautiful plant is a weed. So don't be too surprised when it kills everything. This is as good a place to end as any."





**Slipped Away** by Morgan Barnhart

*Somewhere in Fargo* by Vas Littlecrow and Thien Tran

I was watching TV as I normally did every night after work. I remember exactly what I was watching too, *The Cosby Show*. I loved that show. Still do, actually. I was laughing away, unaware of what was happening no more than ten feet outside my bedroom door.

It's funny, you know, thinking back on it. I really had no idea what was going on. I was so blind to everything. Not just that night, but through out the entire two weeks in which his life slowly faded in front of my eyes. I was so busy with work. Yeah right, I wasn't that busy with work. I just pretended like I was. I would come home and see my dad at the dinner table barely able to eat the canned pears set in front of him fifteen minutes ago. My Uncle was kind enough to help take care of him while I refused to. I didn't verbally refuse to, but through the act of ignorance, I refused.

I didn't see it. Or didn't want to see it. I wanted to see him getting better. I wanted to watch him get up and walk outside and play with our dog as he usually did. I wanted to see him get in his car and go to the grocery store or his weekly visit to the pharmacy to get his dozens of medications refilled. I really just wanted him to be able to have a coherent conversation.

Then it happened, he lost it. He lost his mind.

He came home from yet another trip to the hospital and started babbling about characters from his stories coming to life and laughing at him, telling him that they were going to take his cherry. I just thought he was teasing me. I kept pulling away, not wanting to hear him, telling him I didn't understand. I kept saying I didn't get it, what are you talking about, there's no one here. Then he asked if my cherry had been taken. I felt so uncomfortable. Not because of the question, but because I didn't know what to do. I was lost and confused and didn't want to be having that type of conversation with my father.

Even then, I ignored it. Telling myself that it didn't matter. The next day he seemed to be a lot better, as if he had come back to life. At least, that's what I hoped. I thought it was great that he had recovered from the delusions. Maybe that was a sign that he was finally getting better for real this time.

But it didn't. He lied in bed for days at a time, only getting up to maybe get a drink of water and eat some canned pears. I wasn't home too often, but when I was home, he was always sleeping. I never even went into his room to say hi when I came home. I walked passed as if he wasn't there. I ignored him, not wanting to face my dying father.

When my Uncle finally came into my room in the middle of the *Cosby Show* and said, "He's gone." I thought he was just saying that dad had run away or something. I don't know, my dad was crazy sometimes, it could have happened.

But that wasn't what he was talking about at all.

He was gone.

Even then, when I walked to his bedroom, I couldn't face him. I tried to ignore it. I couldn't face reality. I couldn't. How could he really be gone? It had to be some cruel joke.

I forced myself to take a quick peek. I quickly backed away, gripping my shirt tightly and breathing heavily.

It wasn't him. It wasn't him. He was just sleeping. Just sleeping.

It was him.

In the blink of an eye....he slipped away.

Love Commentary #1:  
**Love is a Bitch Like That**

You know, it's absolutely true what they say about that old whore, Love. Sometimes she needs to be insulted or scorned or even pushed around a little bit. Because once you show her too much compassion, once you start reciting all those silly clichés and cutesy pet names that she wants to hear, she'll begin thinking that you're soft. If you show too much kindness, she'll inevitably mistake that for blindness, and next thing you know she'll be creeping off with your best friend to the men's room for a quickie, or giving the hired help an extra tip in your bedroom while you're out working overtime. If you seem like a pushover, she will sure as shit humiliate you, and probably in full view of your peers, co-workers, and relatives. You just can't expect Love to simply reciprocate your newly-minted feelings of passion without causing you pain; that's like trying to find a dog that doesn't piss on hydrants.

She will make a habit of proudly lifting you up on a pedestal for everyone to see and then slyly shoving you off, cracking jokes while the whole world snickers at your misery. Love is a bitch like that. That's why it's always better to tease her than to please her, to never give in, to always let her seek you out and not vice versa. Because all the joy remains in the hunt for Love; once she's captured you, if you are lucky, she'll eventually set you free, confused and disoriented, without any reason or logic behind your release. If you're unlucky, she'll torment you from the inside until you've died a thousand deaths, and yet you will still long for her torturous embrace.

Love Commentary #2:  
**The Human Factor**

What makes a fiercely independent man crave a female's presence in order to feel complete? The answer seems as complex as any other aspect of psychology. But it is clear that there is truly no substitute for love. Men attempt to suppress this primal need with money, career goals, and various trophies, but they all end up suffocating underneath self-loathing and emptiness. Ideas and material things can't forgive and accept shortcomings, reciprocate adoration and trust, or provide affection and passion. The male's urge to need and give love is thoroughly ingrained in our genetic makeup; it is an integral part of our DNA, as organic as the hormones influencing our behavior. Without it, we become useless things, like music lacking a listening audience, an artist minus a muse, or a tavern devoid of drunkards. So men can try to boycott love with hopes of having a future blissfully free of heartbreak and venereal disease, but ultimately they'll end up searching for it. Why? Because without love, a man ceases to be fully human.

Love Commentary #3:  
**identity theory**

Look, it's time for you guys to admit it: you've officially become anonymous in this city overcrowded with nobodies. Lately people forget your name, even when your face appears vaguely familiar. At thirty-something years old, you've now morphed into a

character that folks recognize but don't know why, a nameless commuter who gets spoken to because you might be a famous musician, the night janitor at their office, or a bully who tormented them throughout middle school. That's why you can hardly make any new friends, let alone find love.

People tell you, "Be patient. There are plenty of fish in the sea." And like a nice guy, you believed that bullshit, enduring bland nights of falling asleep on the couch with a half-empty can of Coors and the television still on. But fuck that anecdote; you've already snagged the fish destined for your hook and released them back into their natural habitat. Or maybe they were discarded in the trash and are now rotting with your self-esteem. Or perhaps they fall from the sky like raindrops, but only in some exotic location that you'll never be lucky enough to visit.

Wherever these alleged fish exist, they aren't swimming in the oceans of insecurity that drown you. That's why you rove, from bed to cubicle to tavern and back to bed again, hoping a foxy lady will drop out of your X-rated dreams and miraculously rescue you from loneliness. You are eager to become pussy whipped and proud, which creates the very look of desperation that keeps you forlorn and clueless. Well guys, I have a newsflash: it's about time you grow a set and learn how to deal with reality. Stop inviting fate to screw you over. Stop allowing your manhood to be a punch line in a cruel joke that makes every woman laugh like she's watching a sitcom. Only then will you have an identity. Only then will you stop being anonymous in this city overcrowded with nobodies.

I could look all the way down the alley when I climbed up on the roof of old man Stark's garage. The alley behind my childhood home was a gold mine. The alley separated a commercial district from a residential area. All the stores faced Brentwood Blvd., and all the houses faced a one block long Patton Ave. Well, almost all of the houses. There was one house that someone snuck in amongst the row of stores, and it was right behind my house. But, that house was really a partnership of two things.

It belonged to Mr. Jordan. He ran a real estate business from the downstairs and raised his family in the rest. He had a son named Edgar, whom I called Eggy. Eggy and I were not only good friends, but treasure hunting partners in the alley.

Right next to Eggy's house was a hardware store that belonged to Mr. Barchanski. He threw out a great bunch of rubble, at least to Eggy and I. Probably 90% of the stuff we used to build our club house against our back fence was pilfered from Barchanski Hardware's trash pit. I mean, the man really had no conception of what really good stuff was.

Another of our favorite hunting places was behind a shoe repair shop. Mr. Jacobs had been there since the street was first built, at least that's what my parents told me. He threw out lots of good pieces of leather and other objects he used in his job.

All up and down the alley was a fine place to look for soda bottles. We could take them back to the store and collect the deposit money—two cents each. Mr. and Mrs. Espinoza, who ran the candy store, would trade us the deposit money for candy. If we each came up with ten bottles at one time, we were in treasure hunting heaven. We had lots of unhealthy candy our parents never knew about. Other unhealthy things for me included climbing up on our neighbor's garage roof. Starks were our neighbors to the north. Mr. Stark drove an old Model "T" Ford that he kept garaged there. Since my Dad was a contractor, he always had a bunch of different materials stacked close to the garage. It made for easy climbing to get to the roof. But, Mr. Stark was afraid I was going to put a hole in his roof or something, so he complained to my parents every time he caught me up there.

Another one of my favorite places to climb was a big cherry tree we had in our back yard. I was sitting in the fork of that cherry tree one day when Mr. Barchanski closed his store and headed for home. He came out the back door, set something on the ground, locked the door, and picked up the things he had been carrying. He had a brief case in his right hand and a length of coiled rope in his left hand. When he headed for his car, he noticed me sitting up in the tree. He smiled and waved at me with his left hand. The coil of rope he was carrying flopped around and settled against his left leg. "Night," he called out in his usual pleasant voice.

That night, Mr. Barchanski hung himself in the basement of his house. Somehow, the alley never seemed the same after that.

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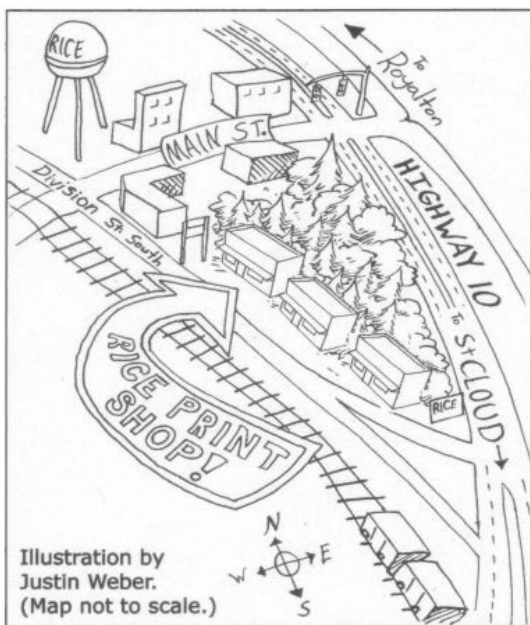
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# Ask Dangerous Lee

October 2006

**Q:** Why is it that when you complain about the food at a restaurant they give you a certificate for a complimentary meal?—Dawn C., Whereabouts Unknown

**A:** Of course it's so they can make it up to you the next time around, but it may also be a second chance to perfect their "special sauce."

**Q:** Why do we have very few African American leaders and why don't pastors play a leading role on the Affirmative Action proposal in the Nov 8th election? They influence us to go to church, but why do they seem to be nonexistent during election time? We are a community right?—Isaac L., Flint, MI

**A:** I have no idea why we have so few African American leaders. However, I do think the problem is that we spend too much time looking outside ourselves and our family for motivation and leadership, which I do understand because many of us have shitty families. As far as pastors are concerned, unless you're filling up the collection plate they could care less about anything else. Just make sure you get your butt out there and vote. You don't need a pastor to tell you that!

**Q:** Can women have no strings attached sex or "booty calls" without getting caught up, as men do?—Wreal, Atlanta, Georgia

**A:** Yes, I don't have a problem with it at all!

**Q:** I love hip-hop just like the next hip-hop head, but what's up with all these rappers who buy gaudy ass jewelry, grillz, and twenty-four-inch rims? Why can't rappers buy things such as land or real estate, something where the value will increase over time, not depreciate over time?—Lamont "Element" Wright, Flint, MI

**A:** I'm sure you've seen Cribs on MTV, right? This show focuses on the real estate and cars that rappers purchase. The problem is that their purchases are always over the top. The real question should be: Why can't rappers make sensible or simple purchases? My answer is: You can take the brotha out of the hood, but you can't take the hood out of the brotha!

**Q:** Why do we as a collective hate the skin that we are in? Blacks want to be White, Whites want to be Black, people with straight hair want curly hair, blue-eyed people want to have hazel eyes, etc.—Sensual Angel, Washington, DC

**A:** Yes, I agree that most of us are not happy with what God gave us, but let's be real, White people don't really want to be Black. White people enjoy mocking Black people and using a 'blackcent' like 'ol girl and Buck Wild, from the second season of Flavor of Love. And Black people just want to be treated equally, we don't really like the pasty look. And, anyone with blue eyes knows it's against the rules to trade them in for a second best pair of hazel eyes. Duh!

## Homophobia

Isaac's question touches on a subject that

has been heavy on my mind lately. I believe that George W. Bush is the leader of the free world because he got to you judgmental types that view homosexuality as an issue. I especially believe this is how he got the Black vote because while many of you sit in church on your high horse you don't take stock of the fact that, as Kanye said, "George Bush doesn't care about Black people," gay, straight or otherwise. African Americans are dying from AIDS at an alarming rate. Is George W. gonna do something about that? Are you?

I keep hearing that George W. is a good Christian man. How so? What about George W. screams Christian? If you can name one thing about politics in general that screams Christianity, spirituality or love, I'll give you a dollar.

Why do you care if homosexuals get married? Heterosexuals do it everyday and we suck at it. Are you afraid that homosexuals will do it better? Will your marriage be null and void if two men or two women exchange rings? I know you've heard this one, "If homosexuals are allowed to get married, what's to stop people from marrying animals?" Do you really see animal and human marriages as something that we have to worry about, or are you so damn ignorant that you would compare homosexuality to bestiality?

Let me make myself clear because I don't want to down religion. I am not against it, but too many religious people are arrogant and self-righteous in their views and opinions. Some religious people use the Bible as a tool to hate and judge everyone who doesn't believe as they do. They say, "Homosexuality is a sin!" or "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve"! Ah yes, maybe so, but I also believe that God is love. God also forgives, and excuse me honey, you're not God and that thing you do at midnight is also a sin. That drug you sniff, that life you took, that child you molest, that shit is most definitely a sin, so stop pointing the finger at people who love those that look just like them when naked, so that you can feel better about the sins you commit. Sin is sin, and we all do it. Yes, you too! Stop shaking your head and mind your own business.

The next time you make fun of Clay Aiken because you think he looks like K.D. Lang, remember that his is probably bigger than yours. I'm talking about his bank account; your mind is so dirty.

## November, 2006

**Q:** Have you insured those damn lips?—Ant Boogie, Houston, Texas

**A:** Which ones?

**Q:** In what parallel universe is Nelly Furtado considered a good rapper and Timbaland considered a good singer?—Afroerotik, Baltimore, Maryland

**A:** Obviously in our universe called The Milky Way. It's the universe that they're making all the

damn money in with number one hits!

**Q:** Why can't a man just tell a woman that he really wants to have sex and cut out the "middle man"?--Abstract World, Clueless

**A:** Men do this on a daily basis, so I assume that you're asking why it is a problem when a man tells a woman that he wants sex. The answer is because if she wants to have sex with you she'll let YOU know.

**Q:** If you have a relationship and your mate has had a history of cheating on whomever they were with, can you believe them when they say they want to be loyal to you? I know this sounds like a dumb question. But sometimes we get in those situations.--Hope, Los Angeles, California

**A:** It doesn't just sound like a dumb question it is a dumb question and you're obviously allowing yourself to get into these situations. That's like asking: If someone has Herpes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday will they still have it on Monday? The answer is HELL YES, so that means the answer to your question is HELL NO!

**Q:** Why is it people are always complaining that there is nothing to do in Flint and are always running south on I-75, yet they never support the positive things happening right here?--Loftlavin, Flint, Michigan

**A:** It's cool, let 'em go to Detroit. When they're walking their asses back on I-75 North because their car was stolen they'll have a lot of time to think about all the fun they had.

## The D Word

Last month I spoke about the issues that some have with homosexuality and gay marriage and this month I want to speak about how straight marriage and divorce are getting on my damn nerves. Lately we have been hit upside the head with the divorce details of country bumpkin singer and Dancing with the Stars competitor, Sara Evans.

I want to start off by saying - Who gives a damn? Seriously, why should I or you care about the sordid and raunchy details of her marriage and divorce? Entertainment Tonight and Inside Edition both have had "exclusive" interviews with the anorexic nanny/assistant/best friend; Alison Clinton that Sara is accusing her husband of cheating with. They also go even deeper by interviewing Alison's husband and her father. What do they know? If Alison did hook up with her best friend's man these two would be the least likely to know! It's like a bad soap opera. This one is accusing that one of cheating. That one is accusing this one of being addicted to porn (Is that a real problem?) Keep that mess in the closet. It's private and quite frankly it's embarrassing, especially since Sara is a "squeaky clean country gal". As I always say...spare me!

However, I am very happy that Sara has decided to step away from Dancing with the Stars to focus on her family. Aside from Jerry Springer she should have been gone at least three weeks ago. In fact when Jerry is voted off, which will be soon, they should discuss her coming on his show. Her life is so trailer park right now! Her Republican/Country fans have been blowing up

the phone lines keeping her stiff ass in competition, but that's another issue altogether.

Then we have Whitney and Bobby. These two should have been divorced at "I do". Is anyone really surprised or shocked by this split? I believe most of us thought "About time" or "So what", and if you're anything like me you thought "So what! It's about time!" Crack may be wack, but so was their marriage and now so are their careers.

There is light at the end of the tunnel for those of you that believe in true love. Mel B AKA Scary Spice and Eddie Murphy are hitting it off really swell these days. That'll last as long as the career of the Spice Girls! Good luck Ed and Scary. You've both been married once before so my advice is to just enjoy each other and sit your asses down. There's no need to plan a walk down the aisle because we all know Eddie ain't into giving half if it don't work out!

Listen to the Dangerous Lee Internet Radio Show on CNotes Radio at [www.nghosi.com](http://www.nghosi.com)

## December 2006

**Q:** What do you think is the most prime example of redundancy right now?—Dezi, Fenton, MI

**A:** Marriage, especially celebrity marriages. Kid Rock and Pamela Anderson are the latest poster children for the "Say No to Marriage" campaign.

**Q:** Why is it that during the Vote or Die campaign of 2004 P. Diddy was anti Bush and said he wanted to get Bush's ass out of office? Now two years later he hasn't spoken on it. Was it because higher powers were threatening to put him on blast? Or was he just trying to sell some t-shirts?—Jason, Oakland, CA

**A:** Diddy was against Bush because Bush was against gay marriage. It's business as usual in Diddy's world despite bastard twins on the way, so there's no need to be against Bush now. Catch my drift?

**Q:** Do you think they put crack in Krispy Kreme donuts? If not, why does a sista ache for them at 3 am?—Mizz Sandy, Chicago, IL

**A:** No, they don't put crack in Krispy Kreme donuts. You smoke crack or weed and crave Krispy Kreme donuts! You should be ashamed of yourself blaming Krispy Kreme for your drug habit. Tisk! Tisk!

**Q:** Should a person marry someone that is in debt, thinking that love conquers all?—Mia, Chicago, IL

**A:** I forget the singer, but the song goes—"Ain't nothing goin' on but the rent. Ya got to have a J-O-B if you want to be with me." So, if you or anyone else thinks broke brothas are cute, by all means tie the knot. Cardboard boxes aren't hard to come by these days.

**Q:** Why is it that our government isn't interested in championing African causes? We stick our collective nose in every other country's business, but Bush & Co. are scared of the motherland. Your thoughts?—Dar, Flint, MI

**A:** What part of "Bush doesn't care about Black people" didn't you understand? Kanye West aint

the smartest brotha with a wire jaw, but he wasn't lying.

### **If You Can't Say Anything Nice (come sit by me)**

'Tis the season to be jolly so instead of ragging on vegetarians this month as I had planned I will be "Nice Lee" and reflect on the wonderful year that I've had. Besides, who gives a damn about vegetarians? They leave me more meat to devour!

I have worked with The Uncommon Sense for two wonderful years. Yep, "Ask Dangerous Lee" has been published for two full years, and it has been an exciting twenty-four months. Matt Zacks believed that I could offer something special to this paper and dammit he was right. What a smart man Matt is!

Seriously, I have met many interesting characters and experienced many new and exciting things since becoming a part of this team. The Uncommon Sense headquarters have also grown by leaps and bounds. We have moved on up to a new location and our accommodations are quite spiffy!

Anyway, enough about the paper let's move on to moi. This year has seen the start of the Danga Zone internet radio show, official Dangerous Lee merchandise, B horror movie roles, deeper involvement with the Flint Film Festival, a career in television, and a new apartment. I'm still broke as a joke, but life is good and looking better everyday. The only thing missing is Wentworth Miller on my speed dial. Hey, a girl can dream! Dreams got me where I am today.

Have a wonderful holiday season and do something nice for yourself and someone less fortunate. Thanks for the love and support and I'll see you in 2007.

### **January, 2007**

**Q:** Why do people always judge a person if they do something that they don't like? And, how do people pick or choose their friends?--Big Tray, Baltimore, Maryland

**A:** People are often judged by things they do or don't do. What are you judging people based on, appearance and stereotypes? Here's the kicker, people pick and choose their friends by the same standards. Wow! That was a breakthrough, huh? Now, guess what I think of you based on the question you asked.

**Q:** Why do some feel they can give advice when they live in a glass hi-rise?--Sensual Angel, Washington DC

**A:** My glass hi-rise happens to have a wonderful view of everything to be judged.

**Q:** Why do so many women "pretend" as though they're not into kinky, casual sex when they know good and well that they are?? I know many women who like to play the "I'm so innocent and wholesome, and I'm only into having sex within the context of a serious relationship" role, but in reality, they love to get their freak on.--Alan, Gary, Indiana

**A:** Not all women want their business in the street. Some of us like to shock and surprise you with "the freak", not give it up within minutes of meeting you. Then again, there are some very prudish and lame women out there when it comes to sex. Either way, don't be mad because you can't get laid!

**Q:** I am a Black male with black parents (high yellow) but I was indirectly raised with subtle traces of Japanese culture. Oddly enough, I wear expensive blazers with casual jeans and sneakers. I prefer super hero movies or anime over 50 Cent and I think I'm the only guy left on earth that refers to women as.....WOMEN and not hoers (Gasp!). Surely I'm malfunctioning. I guess the bottom line question is "What do we as BLACK people consider being BLACK enough?!--Kentaro, Dearborn, MI

**A:** Seems like you're having an identity crisis. You mentioned that your parents are 'high yellow' as if that were separate from the rest of us chocolate Black folks. You also mentioned that you wear "expensive" blazers. Who gives a damn! Stop thinking you're better than the rest of us and that may clear up a few things for you. And, let me tell you something else, it's not just you sweetie, there are many more of us out here that don't fit into stereotypes. Stop buying into ignorance. You should be asking what is NERD enough, because you fit the bill Mr.Traces of Japanese Culture.

**Q:** Do you think there is any particular reason I'm obsessed with boy on boy sex? Or is it that I just like same sex - sex?--Vernay, Wilmington, DE

**A:** You're a freak, Vernay. There are no ifs ands or butts about it.

### **Danger B. Goode**

I'm sorry ya'!!! For the second month in a row I am biting my tongue. I've been ordered to "Be good". Remember last month when I mentioned that I wished I had Prison Break star, Wentworth Miller's phone number on speed dial? Well, I go the second best thing, an autographed photo with strict orders. Check it out:



So, you see I couldn't possible disobey him. You never know what I might receive for being a good girl! If I can break the spell February will be a Dangerous month. I promise!



And Her Cub by John O'Brien

... and breeze and fields green sun breathe just -

Scent. Scent streams past sleep and I'm awake. Boxed- in air heavy smell and heat and no way out. Window open I want someone please I feel sick what's that smell it smells like a burning diaper --

Wet and cool cloth gentle sudden on my forehead. Everything falling back into orbit relax mouth is a desert tasting wine red wine relax voice I hear a voice saying what clumsy Arabic I hear a voice --

Kelly. That's Kelly's voice. At her place. Her futon. Yes. We had dinner. She made dinner. Drinking wine. We were talking about -

Can't get up.

Can't move.

Whole world on my chest pinning my arms legs. Eyes fighting losing open open just open. Eyelids revealing flickers candles--

Why do they smell like burning shit?

Kelly is still talking tripping over syllables all wrong her voice cold hushed flickers bubbling now Kelly stops gasps--

Everything still my stomach turns to ice.

Quiet.

Something's in here with us.

Something dead. Something hungry.

Kelly what are you doing what the fuck are you doing --

Kelly's voice underwater even slow invades my ears like tide hitting beach:

"You have come."

"You agree to the terms?"

"Then I ask for a moment. He deserves an explanation."

My mouth throat hoarse whimpers roars protests.

I sense Kelly moving walking toward me crouching slow fumbling her smell sweet smell cuts through the burning shit. Her breath hot and deep hits my ear and waits. She gently flips the wet cloth over cool caresses my cheek.

"Mike, can you hear me?"

I groan hoarse drool escaping.

Her fingertips rub it down to my chin.

"First of all, before anything else, I wanted you to know that I didn't want it to end this way. I really didn't. I thought you'd come around eventually. But tonight I knew. I just knew you weren't.

"I slipped something into your wine when you went to the bathroom. Sarah got it out of the campus hospital. She didn't really explain what it did. I didn't ask, either."

I feel her shift her wait, kneeling now, struggling just a little bit. Taking my limp hand and pressing it cold against the small hot bulge that's her belly.

"When I was a teenager, me and a few neighbor girls used to screw around with stuff. Witchcraft. I don't think any of us really took it seriously back then, but every once in a while I could feel something watching me while I did it ... waiting for me to figure something out ..."

One of the fingers on her free hand finds the drool trail and lovingly draws circles on my cheek.

"I remember the day I told you. Afterward, I walked around for hours. Just walked. I don't know how I found the bookstore or how I found the book, either ..."

She pushes my hand, forcing it to cup her belly.

"I could read Babylonian somehow, Mike. I could read Babylonian and I knew then what I had to do."

Cold and sharp scrapes my Adam's apple.

It growls low impatient at my feet.

"I'm sorry Mike. It's either you or the baby."

I gurgle try to form words scream.

It pounces on my belly walks up my chest waiting impatient

I can see it's eyes orange burning through --

A deep red pain breaks the skin just under my jawbone.

It laps at me like a saucer of milk.

And my hand on her belly feels dull thuds --

# The Sacred Book of Coffee.

By Loki W. Kaspari

Those of us who live and die by the coffee recognize this book for what it really is; a collection of funny stories which may seem vaguely blasphemous to those with no sense of humor whatsoever. We encourage such people not to read any further.

Many of the manuscripts in the Sacred Book of Coffee have been rescued from garbage bins or restored from fragments, while others have been deliberately suppressed and are only now coming to light. While each Coffee Cult assigns different meanings and levels of importance to each, all are agreed that the spirit of Coffee is in each of them, if you will but look for it.

## Chapter 1 The Book of Awakening.

The oldest of the Books of Coffee, the Awakening is said to have been written by a Heavy Construction Forman as he sat in a dinner waiting for a call from the driver of a cement truck. History is silent about how long he waited, how much coffee he drank, these were the days of the bottomless cup for fifty cents. Though we have evidence that the cement truck driver did arrive eventually, what passed between them is not recorded, which is probably just as well.

In the beginning there was nothing, and into this nothing woke The Lord God. And God was groggy and sore weary, for yea, The Management had been running him ragged. T'was His third universe in a Month and not one of them had been built under budget or on time. And The Lord did wax wrothfull upon his Contracted Help who lo, were probably pinching stuff off the building site even now.

Then did God say unto himself, "I hope there is some Coffee still in my thermos." So saying, he did reach out unto his thermos, and lo it did come to him. And though there was but half a cup within and cold it was, God turned it not aside. For he was God, and if He couldn't summon forth Coffee, He sure as hell wasn't going to summon forth any waters.

"Let there be Coffee in great abundance," Sayth the Lord. "And let it be brought forth hot, with sugar and cream." And even as He spake, Coffee did come forth, piping hot and sweetened unto the Lords liking. And lo, the Lord God did pour out His first cup, and have a sip. And it was good.

And God, having finished His first cup, did look down upon the building site, and lo He did see His Contracted Help milling about and yawning. And the righteous wrath of the Lord did soften to compassion and pity, for His Help was ignorant in the ways of Coffee, and so knew not of early mornings. And the Lord did resolve to bring Coffee unto His Contracted Help, and so ease their suffering.

"Let there be an engine for the making of Coffee, sort of thing." Sayth the Lord, and lo though He did finish but lamely, such an engine there was. But full weary with much lack of sleep, the Contracted Help knew this engine not, but banged on it's side and asked only "Art thys thyng working?" And the Lord spake unto his Contracted Help saying "Use ye but one filter, and add thee sugar and cream if needed."

And the Contracted Help did partake of this sacred Coffee of the Lord, and lo they grew wakeful and eager to face thee day. And the Lord God saw that it was good, and lo, he did bring forth doughnuts and pastries, and muffins and bagels also. Yea,

even did he bring forth individual packets of cream-cheese.

And the Contracted Help rejoiced and spake praises unto the Lord God, with many cries of "Good Coffee!" and "The Lord Maketh A Tasty Bagel." And lo, empowered and awakened by the Coffee, and sustained by the tasty pastries, the Contracted Help did pay heed to the Lord's voice when he spake saying "Get Ye To Thy Work, Thou Lazy Buggers!"

And the Lord did let Coffee flow forth in great abundance, and lo, the work upon the universe was finished in seven days, as opposed to the union regulation ten, yea and even it was completed under budget. And the Contracted Help did rejoice at the bonus that the Lord bestowed upon them for early completion. And though they did pinch stuff from the site like always, despite the Coffee of the Lord, He waxed nor wrathful against them, but rather forgave them, and stayed his hand of vengeance. For yea, the savings allowed the Lord to get replacements in on time, so gravity, and yea the inertia too, were working in a manner pleasing and within specifications.

There weren't enough neutrinos about the place, but the Lord figured he could come back when he had some extras in stock and sneak them in before they were missed.

And it was good.

### **The Second Book of Awakening.**

Being the tale of the Lord God bringing Coffee unto mankind. This manuscript was written by the Mighty Fred, who claimed that Coffee Creatures from Beyond send these words into his mind telepathically, using an old stainless steel coffee urn as a long range antenna. Alas, Fred was committed to a psychiatric ward for insomniacs, and the manuscript remains unfinished. (Research theologians studying the Coffee Cults are still in debate as to whether this book is merely apocryphal or completely absurd.)

It came to pass that the Lord Joe did look down upon the world of men, despite the very important work that He really should have been getting on with, and saw the masses of mankind laziness and atrophy. For man knew not of mornings, nor of hard work at an early hour, and the Lord Joe knew that man would never raise himself above the beasts of the field without help.

Resolving so, the Lord did take a pound of Coffee from His own personal stash, and took it down to the world of men. Before many did he appear, instructing in the proper roasting of the beans, and the grinding thereof also. And those the Lord came

among gave thanks and praise, for the Coffee that the Lord gave unto them was of great virtue and potency, so that but a sip was like unto an awakening of awesome power.

And so mankind did learn of Coffee, and yea some did stay up late at night, and some did awaken early in the morning, but each did give much thanks and praise unto the Lord with cries of “Ahhh, Hot!” and “We’re out of cream again?”

And with the help of this Sacred Coffee, Man did rise up above the savage and closer to the divine, and lo did turn envious eyes heavenwards upon the Coffee of Heaven, believing the Lord Joe in possession of beans of greater potency and virtue than the ones he had bestowed upon mankind. They complained of the grinding and roasting, for they had become greedy and slothful in their Coffee drinking.

And the Lord Joe did wax wrathful upon seeing this, and spake in a voice of thunder, “Thou honor not thy Coffee like that, you know?” But the people of the earth, jittery from too much caffeine, continued their lamentation, and heeded not the warning of the Lord. Not surprisingly, this pissed the Lord off something fierce.

The Lord Joe did consult with his Irony Punishment department, and lo, it was decided that He would flood the world with Coffee from above, and so wipe out everything. For the wickedness of Mankind, and their abuse of the Sacred Coffee did really get to him, but Joe is a forward thinking deity, and did foresee that if he whipped out all life on earth with Heavenly Coffee from above, there would be none left to worship him, and leave a pot on the stove in his honor.

Now it happened that at this time there lived in the land a simple Coffee farmer named Noway, who was pure of heart and vexed by the wickedness and sloth in the land. And the Lord did look down upon him enjoying a cuppa, and giving praise with each sip as was right and proper, and the Lord did decide that of all the men of the world, Noway would be spared.

Noway did look up from his Coffee as the clouds parted and light did shine down upon him from above, and lo, being a farmer he did wonder at the sudden change in weather, and wondered if he should tarp the coffee bushes against hailstones. When lo, the Lord’s voice did descend from on high, and spake thusly to Noway.

“Good Coffee Is It?” and Noway was sore afraid, but the Lord said unto him, “Fear not, for behold I bring you a warning. I shall make it rain Coffee for forty days and forty nights, and all living things shall be drowned or die of sleep deprivation. I command thee to build an Ark.

Whereupon, trembling even on his knees, Noway said, "Ok fine Lord, I can do that. Um..., what's an Ark?"

"It's a boat, Noway." Said the Lord in a weary voice of one who wonders if this is really the best mankind has to offer. "On it you shall take your family and children, and two of every kind of Coffee plant, that they may be spared my wrath." (Here the manuscript breaks off, and what follows is largely illegible, appearing to be in a different hand.)

Hot Coffee from the sky did fall, and the earth did tremble and get all jittery, and there were many cries of Oh Bugger, we art in trouble now!

### **The Book of Suggestions.**

This sacred text, while one of the most recent of the Books of Coffee, is considered to be the most influential on the faith itself. The place described could be any one of literally thousands of privately owned, out-of-the-way coffee shops. What the faithful must ask themselves is this; Did a coffee shop inspire the Book of Suggestions, or can this sacred Book be seen in every coffee shop you go into??

And the Lord spake saying, "Lo, thou shalt open unto me a temple of Coffee, wherein shall ye find bagels and scones, and all manner of delicious bounty, both sweet and savory. And those who serve in this temple shall give unto thee beverages of great virtue and potency, yea, though they be but infusions of roasted subtropical berries and oriental leaves. For those who serve are wise in the ways of Coffee, and ye shall know them by the aprons they wear, black that if they spillith, the stain showeth not.

And within the temple of Coffee, ye shall find comfortable furniture and low tables where ye might find rest, and worry not at the scratches and rips. Mark ye not that the chairs and couches are all different, and matcheth not. Note ye never thy ceramic mug in which those who serve bring ye thy sacred Coffee, though it be chipped and cracked, and have a humorous text on the side. For all of these things are signs unto you, and thou shall know thyself to be in my sight, and thy Coffee is pleasing unto me.

And those who have seen the truth and light of the Coffee shall come unto this place, and know peace, and ye shall find books and chess sets, and other distractions and pleasures of the mind. And forget ye not thy paper and pencil, for the poet shall know of the inspiration through Coffee in this sacred place, yea and the



musician and comic book artist too shall know the music to flow in their head, and the funny little people practically draw themselves.

For in my temple of Coffee, ye shall find rest and sanctuary from the maelstrom of the outside world, and those of my followers who meet ye there shall know ye, by the Coffee you do drink. And ye shall know them, and in the Brotherhood of Coffee will ye find common ground with thy fellow man, and know peace and contentment all the days of thy life.

### **The Gospel of Java.**

This Manuscript was unearthed in a dumpster behind the Java Joint Espresso Bar during an archaeological expedition/open mike nite in 1997, where it is believed to have lain undisturbed for at least three hours. The author is unknown and its authenticity has never been verified, but such details as can be confirmed raise uncomfortable questions. As such, it has been widely renounced as apocryphal by church leaders.

But be ye ever vigilant and righteous in thy Coffee, for there shall come among you those who would see thy sacred Coffee enslaved and thy temples torn down to be replaced with their own graven idols and inferior brews. They will come among you not for love of Coffee, but for greed and conformity, and a need to see all things the same.

Ye shall know these traitors by the signs they shall display, that of the caribou, and the male deer from the stars. Ye shall know them by the signs thanking ye for smoking not! Ye shall know them by their non-biodegradable Styrofoam containers! And ye shall see that they do erect their false temples on unholy ground, strip malls and shopping centers, yea, even unto the lobbies of major corporations head offices.

I say unto thee no good can come of these places, and no good Coffee either, turn ye aside from them and pay no heed to their pleas of "Organically Grown." Nor be ye tempted by their cries of "Discount Card!" Look ye not to their menu and consider, for the Coffee of these places shall be as ashes and dust in thy mouth. And there shall be a great wailing and gnashing of teeth, and the women shall wail and rip their clothing in their grief, and fall upon one another with... (here the original manuscript becomes illegible for several pages, and resumes in what appears to be a different hand.)

And those who serve in these false temples shall be known by the tags of gold with which they profane their sacred black apron. For upon these tags shall be

written, "Hello my name is," as these poor lost souls needs must have even this simple thing written down, lest they forget. By this alone may ye know them for what they are, and know that they know not of true Coffee, nay, nor have they hope for redemption until they cast down their golden tags. For yea, it is more difficult for a servant of strange Coffee to understand true Java, than it is for a cracked Coffee bean to pass through an extra-fine espresso filter.

### The Ten Coffee Commandments.

Said to be the ten sacred laws passed down to mankind when he gave us coffee, they rightly belong with the Second Book of Awakenings. However there is evidence that the Ten Coffee Commandments were recorded before the Second Awakening was ever penned, thus lending more controversy to this already heated issue.

1. I am thy Morning Coffee, thou shalt have no other Java before me!
2. Remember thy Coffee breaks, and keep them holy.
3. Honor thy sugar and cream.
4. Honor thy Coffee cup, and wash it often.
5. Spillith not thy beans upon the ground.
6. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors espresso maker.
7. Thou shalt not drink instant. For he who drinks instant shall be as one set upon by weariness unexpected, and his Coffee shall spill.
8. That which has gone cold may yet be warmed again.
9. Burn not thy tongue on Java too hot.
10. Drink thy Coffee in good company, for where two or three are gathered together, there is Coffee in their midst.

## Contributors

**Beth Langford** is a zoology student who recently spent a summer in the Yukon, working as a plant ecology research assistant.

**Eric Blair** was born in the fall of 1982, though no one is entirely sure why. In a futile attempt to give his life meaning he co-created the Salt Lake City publication Chiaroscuro. He is also a member of the experimental music trio The Samuel Powers Rhythm 3. He is expected to die

of liver failure. If you have nothing better to do you can contact him via e-mail - [EricBlair23@gmail.com](mailto:EricBlair23@gmail.com).

**Laura Cushing** yet lives. Find her at [www.labarc.com](http://www.labarc.com).

**Rick Silva** grew up in Boston, Mass, attended Cornell University, and currently teaches chemistry at a high school on Cape Cod, where he resides with his wife and two cats. He has been involved in small press publishing since his college

days. As a co-founder of Pentagram Komix & Graphix, Rick published and edited Kinships magazine, a speculative fiction literary magazine that ran six issues under Rick's editorship. Along with his wife Gynn, Rick is a partner in Dandelion Studios, a small press comic book company. Rick co-writes the Dandelion Studios comic Zephyr & Reginald: Minions for Hire, and he will also be writing scripts for several new Dandelion Studios projects scheduled for release in 2006. He writes a regular comic book review column for the comic fan site Comicwidows.com, and publishes his own zine, Caravan, on a somewhat irregular basis. Rick attends science fiction and gaming conventions around the northeastern states, and has been involved in the gaming scene for more than 20 years. Rick also writes and performs poetry. Prior to his recent move back to Massachusetts, Rick taught high school science in Jersey City, New Jersey, where he was a regular at several open mic events.

**Gynn Stella** is originally from New Hampshire. She received her degree from Massachusetts College of Art with a major in filmmaking. She currently lives and works on Cape Cod with her husband, Rick Silva. Together they make up Dandelion Studios, a small press comic book company. Gynn does all of the artwork for their comic Zephyr & Reginald: Minions for Hire. Her artwork has appeared in Space & Time magazine, and she was recently selected to be published in the 2005 24-Hour Comics Day anthology. In addition to doing her artwork, Gynn is involved in animal rescue, and has adopted two cats with special needs. Contact Rick & Gynn at [www.dandelionstudios.com](http://www.dandelionstudios.com).

**Dangerous Lee** is a syndicated columnist and single mom living in Michigan. Her column, Ask Dangerous Lee, appears in a several publications on and offline nationwide. She is currently working on a memoir and a book of short stories. Find

her at <http://www.myspace.com/dangerouslee> or email her at [askdangerouslee@hotmail.com](mailto:askdangerouslee@hotmail.com)

**Loki W. Kaspari** is a writer and comic artist whose goal is to leave his honest job to write and draw full time, just like other writers and artists. His work includes Ace and Bog, a strip about a pair of working-class assassins.

**Misty O'Brien** is a tempermental multi-disciplinary artist living in St. Cloud, MN with her husband, John. Interests include painting, music, reading, publishing, crocheting and being annoyed at web forms that won't allow the apostrophe in her last name. Besides this zine, she has websites at [passiongroove.net](http://passiongroove.net) and [bravegirlstudio.net](http://bravegirlstudio.net), works on art, and works part time in retail and in various capacities for VAS Littlecrow.

**John O'Brien** is a writer living in St. Cloud, MN with his wife, Misty. He has written several chapbooks of poetry in his life, with boys + girls being the most recent. When he's not working in the food service industry, his interests include horror movies, vampires, music, reading, & D&D. **Vanessa Littlecrow W** is a self-trained multi-disciplinary artist and businesswoman. Originally from Puerto Rico, she is the owner of Rice Print Shop in Rice, MN, and author of Polska, Sucka! and the Nine Lives of Catnose. She lives in a dome in the forest with her husband and two cats.

**Steve Green** is a former newspaper reporter, and was a founding editor of Critical Wave: the European Science Fiction and Fantasy Review (1988-97). His prose and poetry has appeared in: The Anthology of Fantasy and the Supernatural (Tiger Books, 1994); Critical Vision: Random Essays and Tracts Concerning Sex Religion Death (Headpress, 1995); the magazines SFX, Flesh & Blood and The Dark Side (producing a monthly fanzine column for the last); Dreamers on the Sea of Fate (Sol, 1999) and Ten Years of Terror (FAB Press, 2001). He is the current vice-president of the Fantasy

Amateur Press Association (est. 1937) and administrator of both the Delta Film Award (presented annually at the Festival of Fantastic Films in Manchester) and the Nova Awards for excellence in British and Irish fanzines (presented annually at the science fiction convention Novacon).

**Jamie Ribisi** was born 1978 in a suburb of New York on Long Island, and studied at Boston University where she received a BFA in Painting. She moved back to Long Island and now devotes her time to creating art and curating art exhibitions. Jamie has also founded and developed an online gallery, Pidjin.com, exhibiting and introducing artists from all parts of the world. She continues to expand this site and offer opportunities to emerging artists.

**Gary R. Hoffman** taught English and Speech/Drama for 22 years in Missouri and California. He quit teaching over 20 years ago to go into business for himself. He now lives in a motor home and says, "Home is where you park it!" He now travels the North American Continent, with Sandy and their cat, Callie, and attempts to stay in moderate climates. He has many short stories published in anthologies, ezines, and magazines. He has also won many awards for his short stories.

**Cecil L. Donaby Jr.** is an aspiring freestyle poet and novelist. When he isn't writing, he can be found as a Chef in Detroit, MI. He can be reached at DTownMason@gmail.com or [www.angelfire.com/art2/dieselfromthadinc](http://www.angelfire.com/art2/dieselfromthadinc).

**Morgan Barnhart** is a writer who is currently doing everything in her power to get her stories done so she can send them off to agents. In the meantime, she publishes a monthly zine called, "Comics Monthly". Find her at [morganbarnhart.com](http://morganbarnhart.com) or email her at [duckie.m@gmail.com](mailto:duckie.m@gmail.com).

**Tim O'Brien**: no bio submitted.

**Katrina Joyner**: no bio submitted.

**Lauren Kenney**: no bio submitted.

**Adrian S. Potter** writes both poetry and short fiction. He was awarded first prize in the 2003 Langston Hughes Poetry Contest and the 2006 Červená Barva Press Short Story Contest. He has been published in Colere, City Works, Reed, Blue Earth Review, and The Binnacle, and will have work in an upcoming edition of Poesia. His book, a poetic memoir called My Own Brand of Blues, is forthcoming through RockWay Press. Additional propaganda can be found at

<http://adrianspotter.squarespace.com/>.

**Don Savant** has been writing poetry since the age of 12. Since then he has completed several volumes of poetry, including two that he has self published. He can be contacted through [www.myspace.com/donsavant](http://www.myspace.com/donsavant) or <http://donsavant.14.forumer.com>.

**Jeremy Gibson** is an inspiring writer from Phoenix, Arizona. He has been writing for the past four years and has ambitions of becoming a well known writer who has the reputation of changing people's lives through my literary legacy. He'd also like become an English teacher. Email him at [SimplyJay921@yahoo.com](mailto:SimplyJay921@yahoo.com).

**Submissions:** Send submissions to [misty@bravegirlstudio.net](mailto:misty@bravegirlstudio.net) with "ITAK" as the subject line. Issues are quarterly (Jan, Apr, Jul & Oct). Payment is 1 copy. Visit [bravegirlstudio.net](http://bravegirlstudio.net) for guidelines.

**Ordering:** ~~For a copy of It Takes All Kinds, send your legibly written address with \$2.00 concealed cash or 4 stamps to: ITAK c/o Misty O'Brien, PO Box 5052, St. Cloud, MN 56302. Or, send \$2.50 thru PayPal to [misty@bravegirlstudio.net](mailto:misty@bravegirlstudio.net). International orders add one stamp or \$.50 per issue.~~